

## **CAPSULE SUMMARY**

**PG: 76A-54**

**Williamson-Coburn House**

**5618 Woodland Drive**

**Forest Heights, Prince George's County, Maryland**

**c. 1949**

**Private**

The Williamson-Coburn House is located at 5618 Woodland Drive in the Forest Heights neighborhood of Oxon Hill, Maryland. The building is significant for its architectural and engineering contributions. Closely associated with federally subsidized efforts to alleviate the post World War II housing shortage, the Lustron is integral to the history of housing in the United States. Although not widely implemented, Lustrons contribute to the post war development of the residential landscape funded primarily through government programs. As such, they are part of a long history of federally subsidized housing efforts, although characterized by innovations that seem remarkably daring in the context of federal housing programs—particularly given the strength of the forestry and conventional homebuilding industry. Further, the Lustron is significant for its contributions to prefabricated metal housing technology of the era as the manufacturing techniques utilized assembly line production directly influenced by the automobile industry. Porcelain-enameled steel panels were an innovative advancement for prefabricated housing construction, particularly as utilized in the single-floor modern ranch house plan that provides the Lustron with their unusual appearance. Their failure to capture a viable market is attributable perhaps to a nation that was truly ill-prepared to embrace modernity within the dearly-held institution of the house. The Williamson-Coburn Residence retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a Lustron house constructed in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. in the post World War II era.

This one-story dwelling is the two-bedroom, Deluxe Westchester model produced by the Lustron Company in Columbus, Ohio. This Lustron is oriented so that it reads as a front-gabled, two-bay dwelling. Designed to emulate the ranch form, the steel frame dwelling rests on a parged, concrete-slab foundation. Porcelain-enameled steel panels measuring two feet by two feet are bolted to the steel frame. Based on historic photos, the panels were originally white with “surf blue” accents but have since been painted a matte yellow with white accents and trim. The roof is covered in enameled steel shingles and finished with overhanging eaves. An interior, metal-clad stack pierces the roofline; there is no fireplace. A defining feature of the Westchester model is the integral porch on the southeast corner. Sheltered by the integral porch, the main entry holds a replacement paneled wood door. Window openings hold non-original sash composed of a central fixed light flanked by one-light casements. Although all original window sash has been removed, the openings retain their enameled steel surrounds, sills, and lintels with modern interpretations of the quirked cyma reversa.

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**1. Name of Property** (indicate preferred name)

historic Williamson-Coburn House

other

## 2. Location

street and number 5618 Woodland Drive not for publication

city, town	Oxon Hill	vicinity
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county	Prince George's
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**3. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name	Daniel Wilson
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street and number	12460 Uncle Charles Spur	telephone
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city, town	Dunkirk	state	MD	zip code	20754
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#### 4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Prince George's County Courthouse	liber	30318	folio	252
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city, town	Upper Marlboro	tax map	95	tax parcel	2	tax ID number	12 1218775
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## 5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other:

## 6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
_____ district	_____ public	_____ agriculture	_____ landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  X  </u> building(s)	<u>  X  </u> private	_____ commerce/trade	_____ recreation/culture	<u>      2      </u>	<u>      0      </u> buildings
_____ structure	_____ both	_____ defense	_____ religion	_____	_____ sites
_____ site		<u>  X  </u> domestic	_____ social	_____	_____ structures
_____ object		_____ education	_____ transportation	_____	_____ objects
		_____ funerary	_____ work in progress	<u>      2      </u>	<u>      0      </u> Total
		_____ government	_____ unknown		
		_____ health care	_____ vacant/not in use		
		_____ industry	_____ other:		
				<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>	
				<u>      0      </u>	

## 7. Description

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### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Williamson-Coburn House is located at 5618 Woodland Drive in Forest Heights, Maryland. Situated less than one mile from the southeastern border of the District of Columbia and within the Capital Beltway, this Lustron is one of two extant Lustrons within the community of Forest Heights. Constructed circa 1949, this Lustron is set back approximately thirty feet from the road on a grassy lot sloped to the west. Mature trees and shrubs frame the property, which is accessed via a shared asphalt driveway to the north. A concrete walkway leads from the road up to the front entryway. A one story shed is located in the southeast corner of the property.

### DWELLING

Constructed circa 1949, this one-story dwelling is the two-bedroom, Deluxe Westchester Model produced by the Lustron Company in Columbus, Ohio. This Lustron is oriented so that it reads as a front-gabled, two-bay dwelling. Designed to emulate the ranch form, the steel frame dwelling rests on a parged, concrete-slab foundation. Porcelain-enameled steel panels measuring two feet by two feet are bolted to the steel frame. Based on historic photos, the panels were originally white with "surf blue" accents but have since been painted a matte yellow with white accents and trim.<sup>1</sup> The paint eliminates the intended "luster" of the porcelain enamel. The gable roof is covered in enameled steel shingles and finished with overhanging eaves. An interior, metal-clad stack pierces the roofline; there is no fireplace. Vertical enameled steel panels are located within the upper gable end. A defining feature of the Westchester Model is the six-foot by twelve-foot cutout that creates an integral entryway on the southeast corner. A simple square post has replaced the original curved steel pipe and artistically angled gutters that are characteristic of the Deluxe Westchester Model.

Located within the integral porch, the single-leaf main entry holds a non-original, paneled wood door with a single oval-shaped light. The sole window opening on the façade (northwest elevation) holds non-original sash composed of a central fixed light flanked by one-light casements. In fact, all of the window openings now contain non-original sash. The wide openings contain tripartite windows identical to those utilized on the façade. Although all original window sash has been removed, the openings retain their enameled steel surrounds, sills, and lintels with modern interpretations of the quirked cyma reversa.

The northeast (side) elevation features a single-leaf door opening in the third bay. A replacement, paneled wood door is accessed via a concrete stoop. Window openings consist of a non-original tripartite window in the first bay and a 1/1, double-hung, vinyl-sash window in the second bay. A two-light, sliding vinyl sash window is located in the fourth bay.

Fenestration of the southwest (side) elevation consists of a two-light vinyl-sash window located in the first bay. The second and third bays hold non-original tripartite windows. The central bay projects slightly

<sup>1</sup> Map of Forest Heights, retrieved on July 5, 2011 from website [www.google.com/maps](http://www.google.com/maps).

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from the face of the main block, stopping at the end of the overhanging eave. The southeast (rear) elevation contains two small fixed vinyl windows set in narrow vinyl surrounds.

Located on the rear of the dwelling is a one-story, one-bay addition. Based on its form and materials, this addition appears to have been constructed between 1980 and 1984. Set on a solid foundation with parged exterior, this wood-frame addition is clad in German vinyl siding. A front-gabled, asphalt-shingled roof caps the addition. Unlike the main block, the addition does not have overhanging eaves. Double-leaf, French wood doors located on the rear elevation are set in a wide, plain vinyl surround. A louvered vent is located in the upper gable end.

Access to the interior of this Lustron revealed an altered floor plan. The galley kitchen has been replaced with a more open, modern kitchen. A majority of the built-in elements were removed or replaced, including the vanity in the master bedroom. Pocket doors which accessed the built-in closets have been replaced with modern paneled doors. Ceramic tile has been laid down over the original flooring material. Furthermore, the enameled steel interior panels have been painted; their original luster obscured.

### SHED

Constructed circa 1949, this one-story, one-bay shed is located southeast of the main dwelling. Set on a poured concrete foundation, this shed is constructed of parged, concrete block and capped with a front-gabled, asphalt-shingled roof. A single-leaf, flush metal door is located on the facade (northwest) elevation. German vinyl siding clads the upper gable ends. Paired, one-light casements surmounted by two-light fixed windows pierce the southwest (side) and southeast (rear) elevations.

### INTEGRITY

The Williamson-Coburn House at 5618 Woodland Drive maintains a moderate degree of integrity of design, feeling, and materials due the installation of non-original windows and doors. Although the enameled steel panels have been painted, diminishing their luster, their individual tile form is retained. The rear addition is not visible from the public right-of-way, is diminutive in form, and does not hinder the dwelling's identification as a Deluxe Westchester Model. Alteration of the original floor plan has diminished, but not compromised, its integrity as much of the original wall and ceiling paneling is extant, revealing the austere construction of Lustrons. The dwelling retains integrity of location, setting, and feeling within the residential neighborhood of Forest Heights. All of these aspects contribute to this building's integrity of association.

Overall, the Lustron house at 5618 Woodland Drive maintains a moderate level of integrity.

## 8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: <u>Local History</u>

**Specific dates** c. 1949 **Architect/Builder** Lustron

**Construction dates** c. 1949, c. 2010

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☐ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Williamson-Coburn House at 5618 Woodland Drive in Forest Heights, Maryland, is significant for its architectural and engineering contributions. Federally subsidized, Lustrons are integral to the history of housing in the United States following World War II. Lustrons contributed to the post war development of the residential landscape which was funded primarily through government programs. As such, they are part of a long history of federally subsidized housing efforts, although characterized by innovations that seem remarkably daring in the context of federal housing programs—particularly given the strength of the forestry and conventional homebuilding industry.<sup>2</sup> Constructed of prefabricated metal, Lustrons mark an unparalleled era of design and assembly line production in the building industry. Utilizing the latest in sciences, Lustrons were clad in porcelain-enameled steel panels yet retained a familiar modern ranch house plan. Albeit ultimately unsuccessful, as practical, affordable housing for the average family, Lustrons represent one of the most ambitious campaigns in private residential construction to infuse modernity throughout everyday life.<sup>3</sup>

As noted by Cynthia Liccese-Torres and Kim A. O'Connell, the few remaining Lustrons are "significant not just as an American housing experiment and architectural icon, but as an unprecedented preservation challenge."<sup>4</sup> The dwelling at 5618 Woodland Drive retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a Lustron house constructed in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C. in the post World War II era.

<sup>2</sup> Patricia Garbe Morillo, "Lustrons in New Jersey," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Multiple Property Listing (New Jersey: 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Patricia Garbe Morillo, "Lustrons in New Jersey," National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Multiple Property Listing (New Jersey: 2000).

<sup>4</sup> Cynthia Liccese-Torres and Kim A. O'Connell, "The Illustrious Lustron: A Guide for the Disassembly and Preservation of America's Modern Metal Marvel" (Arlington, Virginia: Arlington County, 2007), 3.

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### HISTORIC CONTEXT

#### LUSTRON CONTEXT

Between 1948 and 1950, the Lustron Corporation of Columbus, Ohio produced pre-fabricated houses of porcelain-enameled steel that were shipped across the United States. The Lustron Corporation was led by Carl Strandlund, who had first entered the porcelain-enameled steel industry as an employee of Chicago Vitreous Enamel Products Company in April 1942. Initially focused on producing steel enamelware for household appliances, Chicago Vitreous later developed high-grade steel enameled panels used for storefronts, interior walls, and other architectural uses under the name Porcelain Products Company, which was the first to trademark the "Lustron" product name.<sup>5</sup>

In the late 1930s, the Porcelain Products Company contracted with the Standard Oil Company of Indiana to produce gas stations constructed of enameled steel. By the mid-1940s, steel had come under regulation of the federal government due to shortages caused by World War II efforts. In 1946, Strandlund (by this time named vice-president and general manager of Chicago Vitreous) traveled to Washington, D.C., in order to secure steel from the Civil Production Administration (CPA) for gas station production.<sup>6</sup> The CPA, concerned with a growing post-War housing shortage, instead encouraged Strandlund to consider using the porcelain enameled steel components for pre-fabricated housing.<sup>7</sup>

Strandlund hired architects Ray Blass and Morris Beckman to draw up concept plans for a prefabricated steel home to present to officials.<sup>8</sup> The resulting prototype, called the "Esquire," was a two-bedroom house featuring built-in shelves and cabinets, radiant heating, and large picture windows.<sup>9</sup> The house was decidedly modern in construction, with every surface made of porcelain-enameled steel, with the exception of its asphalt tile flooring and aluminum casement windows. In order to appeal to buyers, the architects designed the prototype in the ranch form, which was becoming increasingly popular in modern house construction.

Strandlund returned to Washington with the Lustron prototype and secured funding, which included a substantial Reconstruction Finance Corporation loan. Chicago Vitreous came to view the loans for the project as too risky, and as a result Strandlund formally set up the new "Lustron Corporation" on October 31, 1947. That same day, Strandlund resigned from Chicago Vitreous and purchased the Lustron trademark

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 11.

<sup>6</sup> National Register of Historic Places, Lustron Houses in Alabama, MPD, National Register # 64500008.

<sup>7</sup> H. Ward Jandl, *Yesterday's Houses of Tomorrow* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1991), 184.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 18.

<sup>9</sup> Lustron Houses in Alabama, MPD.

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and the machinery necessary to produce the dwellings.<sup>10</sup> The new venture required a large manufacturing plant ideally located in the heart of the county. Strandlund choose a former Curtiss-Wright airplane plant in Columbus, Ohio, ranging six football fields in length, as the new home for the Lustron Corporation.<sup>11</sup> Lustron houses were marketed across the country, and the first units to be produced at the plant were exhibit models to be showcased in major cities. The Lustron Corporation established a nationwide dealer network, recruiting well-financed men to act as sales representatives.<sup>12</sup> By the spring of 1949, 143 dealers were established across the country.

The Lustron Corporation developed and implemented cutting-edge production techniques. The production process included large presses that stamped out steel to make everything from exterior panels to the bath tub, modern welding techniques to effectively assemble the various wall sections, and mechanized porcelain-enameling procedures to provide a glass-like finish to both sides panels. Lustrons were built and assembled on an assembly line in a fashion similar to automobiles and then loaded strategically onto one tractor trailer truck for delivery to the dealer. The truck would then arrive at the prepared house site (all that was needed was a concrete slab) and would be unloaded as assembly progressed. The truck was packed in reverse order so that parts needed first were readily available. The houses came with a manual for the local builders to follow. The wall and roof trusses were assembled first, followed by the interior and exterior panels, and then the built-in amenities. Mechanical equipment was installed last.

According to advertising literature published by the Lustron Corporation, the houses were designed to resemble the "modified ranch style,"<sup>13</sup> and while several models existed, each was one-story, had a rectangular form, a gable-roof, and an exterior and interior skin of enameled-steel panels supported by a structural-steel frame. Houses could be purchased in one of four exterior colors: surf blue, dove gray, maize yellow, and desert tan. Designed similarly to the Esquire prototype, the "Westchester" became the first model available for public sale. The Westchester two-bedroom and the Westchester two-bedroom Deluxe became the most popular Lustron house models. The two-bedroom Westchester is easily identified by its integral front porch.<sup>14</sup>

The plant was designed to produce large quantities of houses, with Strandlund projecting that the plant could produce 100 houses every 23 hours. Unfortunately, production did not begin until November 1948, and the first Lustron house for public sale did not leave the manufacturing plant until January 1949.<sup>15</sup> At

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 37

<sup>11</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 32-36.

<sup>12</sup> Jandl, 190.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 69.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 67, 69, 71.

<sup>15</sup> National Register of Historic Places, A New Standard for Living: Lustron Houses in Indiana, MPD.

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the peak of manufacturing in August 1949, only 26 houses were manufactured per day.<sup>16</sup> Strandlund's plans to manufacture approximately 30,000 houses per year were never realized, and the Corporation fell far short of its goal. Between 1946 and 1950, when the Corporation folded, final production numbered less than 2,500 houses.

In 1950, due to non-payment of loans, the U.S. Government called-in its loans to the Lustron Corporation. Several major problems plagued the corporation, including the reluctance of lending institutions to finance mortgages for what was considered a non-traditional dwelling. Furthermore, a number of cities' building codes did not permit steel structures. While the initial cost of the buildings were competitive, poorly trained assemblers and rising steel prices escalated the cost of a Lustron to more than traditional houses.

During the Lustron Corporation's brief period of production, its houses were built primarily in the eastern two-thirds of the country.<sup>17</sup> A number of those houses were constructed in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area. The Lustron Corporation first advertised in the region with the opening of an exhibition of a prototype house in May 1948 at New Hampshire Avenue and E Street, N.W. Upon its opening, the *Washington Post*, the *Times-Herald* and the *Star* carried picture stories in their Sunday editions.<sup>18</sup> A July 1948 article in the *Washington Post* reported that prospective buyers could list their names for consideration at the exhibit house, although the manufacturer "reserves the right to give priorities to veterans and other qualified purchasers."<sup>19</sup> The article noted that over 40,000 people had come to inspect the model and hundreds of calls for information about the houses had been received.

Hints of the Lustron Corporation's future problems were revealed in a 1948 article in *The Washington Post* that noted, "Naming of the local distributor had been held up for several weeks, pending completion of financing arrangements and other details. Name of the dealer was scheduled to be announced last Sunday, was later postponed to this weekend and has now been postponed indefinitely, it was learned."<sup>20</sup> At the end of July 1948, Carlton Construction Corporation, led by president Charles Prins, was finally named area dealer and erector of Lustrons.<sup>21</sup> The area covered by Carlton Construction included Washington, D.C., Fairfax and Arlington Counties and the City of Alexandria in Virginia, and Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties in Maryland.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Lustron Houses in Alabama, MPD.

<sup>17</sup> A New Standard for Living: Lustron Houses in Indiana, MPD.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas T. Feters, *The Lustron Home* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 49-50.

<sup>19</sup> "Firm Taking Orders for Steel Home," *Washington Post*, July 18, 1948, pg. R2; ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>20</sup> "Firm Taking Orders for Steel Home," *Washington Post*, July 18, 1948, pg. R2; ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

<sup>21</sup> Cynthia Liccesse-Torres and Kim A. O'Connell, "The Illustrious Lustron: A Guide for the Disassembly and Preservation of America's Modern Metal Marvel," 9.

<sup>22</sup> "Lustron Names Dealer; 30 Units Per Year Allocated to D.C. Area," *Washington Post*, July 25, 1948, pg. R1; ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

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Located at 1013 15<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., the Washington, D.C., area sales office opened on August 3, 1948. By the end of the summer more than 75,000 visitors had toured the model home and 1,500 prospective buyers were on the waiting list. While early projections stated that the first shipments to the area would occur by September 1948, it appears that the first permits in Virginia and Maryland were approved only by the end of that year. By August 1949, the Carlton Construction Company was no longer in business and MacFarlane Enterprises, located at 728 17<sup>th</sup> Street, N.W., had replaced them as the area dealer. Construction costs within the region rose rapidly, following a nationwide trend, and soon area Lustrons cost buyers \$9,188, not including the lot and amenities within the house.<sup>23</sup>

While the Washington dealer initially had upwards of 1,200 buyers registered, only thirty houses were actually delivered.<sup>24</sup> Seven of those houses were delivered to Maryland, five of which were constructed in Prince George's County and are currently extant. Manufactured for less than four years, the failure of the Lustron was a result of "poor timing, rising costs, inflexible codes and regulations, poor distribution network, and a lack of control over local housing markets."<sup>25</sup> In 1950, the Lustron Corporation declared bankruptcy, ending a postwar, prefabricated housing experiment.

### PROPERTY CONTEXT

The Lustron at 5618 Woodland Drive is located in the neighborhood of Forest Heights in Prince George's County, Maryland. Forest Heights was established in 1940 as a suburban residential community in western Prince George's County, adjacent to the southeastern boundary of Washington, D.C. Located on the south side of Southern Avenue, the community is divided by Indian Head Highway. The highway, six-lanes wide with a landscaped median, runs through the center of the community, dividing it into two separate neighborhoods.

In 1940, the Washington Heights Realty Corporation platted Forest Heights on a 136-acre tract of undeveloped, wooded land. Lots were relatively large, approximately 60 feet wide and 125 feet deep on curvilinear blocks. The streets were named after Native American tribes, such as Iroquois Way and Mohican Drive. Houses had a consistent setback of 25 feet.<sup>26</sup> In June 1941, real estate firm McKeever & Whiteford advertised a "Special for Builders." They invited "reliable" builders to see their "beautiful new

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<sup>23</sup> Torres and O'Connell, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Eric N. Dobson, "Architecture in Virginia: Lustron Homes in Arlington County, Virginia" (unpublished paper, School of Architecture, University of Virginia, 1992), 11.

<sup>25</sup> Tom Wolfe and Leonard Garfield, "'A New Standard for Living': the Lustron House, 1946-1950," in *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture III*, edited by Thomas Carter and Bernard L. Herman (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 51.

<sup>26</sup> Prince George's County Land Records, Circuit Court, BB 8:43.

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subdivision. 400 wooded lots, approved for FHA low-cost housing loans.<sup>27</sup> By October of that year, Southern Maryland Homes, Inc., was pre-showing their model home in the Forest Heights subdivision. The "Homes of Five and Six Rooms" in the "Defense Area" sold for \$5,250 to \$5,990 and were advertised for their convenient location near the Navy Yard and Naval Research Laboratory.<sup>28</sup> An article from *The Washington Post* that same month also noted the subdivision's convenient location to "Bolling Field, Anacostia Naval Air Base, the Navy Yard, and Indianhead powder plant [*sic*]." The article noted that homebuyers would "find standards of architecture and construction unusual in homes in the moderate priced bracket! Featured are two large bedrooms, bath with shower, living room over 22 feet long with fire place, large kitchen, full basement, air-conditioned heat and large lots."<sup>29</sup> As the name Forest Heights implies, the new suburb was located outside the low-lying city.

Initial development in Forest Heights was slow, in large part due to the onset of World War II (1941-1945). Yet the need for housing, prior to and during the war, resulted in the mass production of residential buildings throughout the Washington metropolitan area. This need was prompted by government expansion, with new residents traveling daily to the nation's capital from the suburbs by car, train, streetcar, and bus. The older, existing suburbs attracted high-status employees and professionals, while new suburbs like Forest Heights catered to young people just starting families and careers. Important to the development of Forest Heights was the opening of Indian Head Highway (MD 210). Constructed in 1942 as the Indian Head Naval Reservation Access Road, the highway provided quicker and easier transportation for local residents in Prince George's County and Charles County. It also physically and visually divided the community into two sections, which allowed for a more intimate neighborhood.

By July 1942, the first group of 25 houses in Forest Heights was sold. The growing need for housing prompted Southern Maryland Homes to immediately begin construction of 46 additional houses, of which 37 were already sold.<sup>30</sup> The demand for housing was great, with at least 25 applicants per house. Yet, the building boom in the Washington metropolitan area during and after the war created a shortage of building materials that included lumber, nails, pipes, and flooring. New construction throughout the area, at the urging of the government, was targeted to federal and military installations, and the facilities to service them such as roads, schools, and housing. Thus, Southern Maryland Homes, faced with 66 contracts on houses not yet completed, was unable to build while they waited for building materials. Sales were temporarily suspended until materials became available.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Classified Ad, *The Washington Post*, 23 June 1941, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> Display Ad, *The Washington Post*, 5 October 1941, p. R6.

<sup>29</sup> "Forest Heights Community Shows First Homes Today," *The Washington Post*, 12 October 1941, p. R7.

<sup>30</sup> Display Ad, *The Washington Post*, 12 July 1942, p. R7.

<sup>31</sup> Don O'Reilly, "Builder Hold Mixed Views on Prospects," *The Washington Post*, 1 June 1946, p. 9.

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By 1947, the economy in Maryland was stable enough to support private construction once again. This had a tremendous effect on growing suburbs like Forest Heights, which by 1949 contained approximately 300 houses with new construction continuing at a rapid pace. These new houses were marketed directly to veterans returning from the war and employees of the out-lying government and military installations. Advertisements for the neighborhood touted Federal Housing Administration (FHA) financing for potential buyers.

The growing community of Forest Heights proved to be an attractive, affordable, well-planned subdivision conveniently located near both Washington, D.C. and military installations in Prince George's County. To better serve the growing number of commuters in the area, the Washington, Marlboro and Annapolis (WM&A) Motor Lines extended bus service to Forest Heights and the nearby commercial businesses in Oxon Hill in May 1948.<sup>32</sup> In an effort to improve roads and services, Forest Heights incorporated as a town in April 1949.<sup>33</sup> The opening of the South Capitol Street Bridge (now called the Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge) in 1950 provided an easier commute between the District of Columbia and Prince George's County, thus attracting new residents to Forest Heights.

The improving methods and routes of transportation offered to the residents of Forest Heights encouraged development more rapidly than previously experienced. Further, McKeever & Whiteford's exclusive sales agreement with the Washington Heights Realty Corporation had ended by 1947, opening the neighborhood to a greater number of developers and builders. This prompted a change not only in the materials and size of the housing being constructed, but the forms and designs used as well. For example, in 1954, Ralph and Jean Rocks resubdivided a portion of Forest Heights and platted three sections on which they constructed large, two-story twin dwellings. These twin dwellings were chosen as one of *The Washington Post's* "Homes of '54." The "semidetached" house was offered for sale at \$13,950 with no down payment. The houses featured "three bedrooms, 1 ½ baths, copper plumbing, full basement and equipped kitchen."<sup>34</sup> The houses were "preengineered and prefabricated" by American Houses, Inc.<sup>35</sup> The twin houses proved to be overwhelmingly popular and by 1955, Allen & Rocks, Inc. had sold 180 houses and were opening their third section for development.<sup>36</sup> Also active in the mid-1950s was William P. Martin, who built concrete-block ranch houses veneered in brick. One of his designs was also chosen as a "Home of '54."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> "Buses Authorized for Oxon Hill and Forest Heights," *The Washington Post*, 20 May 1948, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Phillip J. Austensen, "There'll Be Hot Time Tonight in New Town of Forest Heights," *The Washington Post*, 20 June 1949, p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> "Variety to Keynote Homes of '54," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 18 July 1954, p. R1.

<sup>35</sup> "A 'Home of '54' Overlooking the Potomac," *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 12 September 1954, p. H14.

<sup>36</sup> Display Ad, *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 26 June 1955, p. G5.

<sup>37</sup> Display Ad, *The Washington Post*, 3 October 1954, p. R15.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. PG: 76A-54

Williamson-Coburn House  
Continuation Sheet

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Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the Town of Forest Heights annexed several parcels of land on both sides of Indian Head Highway, gradually increasing the municipal boundaries of the town.<sup>38</sup> Forest Heights was fully developed as a residential suburb by 1965. The Eastover Shopping Center, located just north of Forest Heights, was completed in 1955 and provided a shopping destination for residents. The community is also served by a community center (the former municipal building) and two schools: Forest Heights Elementary School and Flintstone Elementary School.

On May 15, 1948, William B. and Vivian I. Rowe conveyed Lots 48, 49, 50, and 51 of their recently resubdivided Forest Heights neighborhood to Will B. Williamson and Ann H. Williamson.<sup>39</sup> Construction of the house is attributed to the Williamsons, however, information related to the family could not be located. In 1950, the Williamsons sold the property to Ralph Stiles Smith and his wife Caroline Elizabeth Smith.<sup>40</sup> Information related to the Smiths could not be located. In 1958, the dwelling was advertised for sale in *The Washington Post*. The ad read:

*"A lovely neighborhood with a lifetime LUSTRON home., 2 large bedrms., living rm.-dining rm. Comb., utility rm., fully equipped kitchen. Ideal for a family that dislikes upkeep problems. Home fully equipped with storm doors, windows. Workshop in rear year."*<sup>41</sup>

The Smiths conveyed the property to John T. Coburn, Belle Berkley Coburn, and their daughter Nan C. Foster [nee Coburn] in 1959.<sup>42</sup> John Coburn, reverend, was born in 1891 and his wife born in 1896. At the time of the 1930 U.S. Federal Census, the Coburns were renting a house in Richmond, Virginia. The preacher and his wife also had an adopted son, James M.<sup>43</sup> The Coburns moved to Washington, D.C., for John's position with the Fifth Street Baptist Church in Southwest, Washington, D.C., as well as the Forest Heights Baptist Church in Forest Heights. The proximity of the Forest Heights Baptist Church, approximately one mile away, may have prompted the Coburn's purchase of 5618 Woodland Drive. John T. Coburn died on February 28, 1970 and Belle Berkley Coburn on August 1, 1979.

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<sup>38</sup> George D. Denny, Jr., *Proud Past, Promising Future: Cities and Towns in Prince George's County, Maryland* (Brentwood, MD: Tuxedo Press, 1997), 181.

<sup>39</sup> William B. Rowe and Vivian I. Rowe to Will B. Williamson and Ann H. Williamson, Prince George's County Land Records, 1086:486.

<sup>40</sup> Will B. Williamson and Ann H. Williamson to Ralph Stiles Smith and Caroline Elizabeth Smith, Prince George's County Land Records, 1203:277.

<sup>41</sup> "Classified Ad 9 -- No Title." *The Washington Post and Times Herald* (1954-1959), October 5, 1958, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed July 7, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Ralph Stiles Smith and Caroline Elizabeth Smith to John T. Coburn, Belle Berkley Coburn, and Nan C. Foster, Prince George's County Land Records, WWW 2398:170.

<sup>43</sup> 1930 U.S. Federal Census, Richmond, Richmond (Independent City), Virginia, Series 2481, Page 7A, Enumeration District 101, Image 309.0, John T. Coburn.

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Williamson-Coburn House  
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In April, 1980, Nan C. Foster conveyed the dwelling to Rene M. Foster, A. Scott Foster, and Jon B. Foster.<sup>44</sup> The Fosters conveyed the property in March of 1981 to James H. Sellers and Claude M. Bain.<sup>45</sup> A year later, almost to the day, the Bains conveyed their interest in the property to James H. Sellers.<sup>46</sup>

In July, 1982, James H. Sellers conveyed the property to Mark E. Richardson and his wife, Michelle Y. Richardson.<sup>47</sup> The Richardsons owned the Lustron until 1992, when the property was conveyed in its entirety to Mark.<sup>48</sup> Mark was employed as the executive director of the Business Council on the Reduction of Paperwork. This council has been dedicated to paperwork reduction and regulatory reform since its formation in 1942. Information related to Michelle Y. Richardson could not be located.

In 1996, Richardson conveyed the property to Carlos P. Trainor and Grossie Trainor.<sup>49</sup> Information related to Carlos or Grossie could not be located. A Quit Claim Deed was executed in January, 2009; the result leaving Carlos Trainor with complete ownership of the property.<sup>50</sup>

In February of 2011, as a result of Trainor's default on his loan, the property was sold by a trustee to the current owner, Daniel Wilson.<sup>51</sup> Information related to Wilson could not be located.

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<sup>44</sup> Nan C. Foster to Rene M. Foster, A. Scott Foster, and Jon B. Foster, Prince George's County Land Records, 5250:3.

<sup>45</sup> Nan C. Foster, power of attorney, to James H. Sellers and Claude M. Bain, Prince George's County Land Records, NLP 5383:735.

<sup>46</sup> Claude M. Bain, III, and Elizabeth F. Bain to James H. Sellers, Prince George's County Land Records, NLP 5507:749.

<sup>47</sup> James H. Sellers to Mark E. Richardson and Michelle Y. Richardson, Prince George's County Land Records, NLP 5564:771.

<sup>48</sup> Mark E. Richardson and Michelle Y. Richardson to Mark E. Richardson, Prince George's County Land Records, VJ 8505:741.

<sup>49</sup> Mark E. Richardson to Carlos P. Trainor and Grossie Trainor, Prince George's County Land Records, VY 10566:606.

<sup>50</sup> Carlos P. Trainor and Grossie C. Trainor to Carlos P. Trainor, Prince George's County Land Records, PM 30318:252.

<sup>51</sup> Jacob Geesing to Daneil Wilson, Prince George's County Land Records, 32430:493.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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U.S. Federal Census (Population Schedule). Online: The Generations Network, Inc., 2007. Subscription database. Digital scan of original records in the National Archives, Washington, DC. <http://www.ancestry.com>.  
Fetters, Thomas T. *The Lustron Home*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2002.  
Prince George's County Land Records.  
*The Washington Post*.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property	0.1885	
Acreage of historical setting	0.1885	
Quadrangle name	Anacostia	Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The Williamson-Coburn House at 5619 Woodland Drive is located on a 0.1885-acre parcel on the east side of Woodland Drive. The western boundary is formed by Woodland Drive. The northern boundary extends through the middle of the shared driveway to a stand of mature hardwoods. A chain-link metal fence forms the eastern bounds of the property. The southern boundary of the property follows a concrete-block retaining wall with brick coping. This dwelling has been associated with Parcel 2 as noted on Tax Map 95 since its construction c. 1949.

## 11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Paul Weishar / Architectural Historian		
organization	EHT Traceries, Inc. for M-NCPPC	date	September 2011
street & number	1121 Fifth Street, N.W.	telephone	(202) 393-1199
city or town	Washington	state	D.C.

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Maryland Department of Planning  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

# Maryland Historical Trust

## Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

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Williamson-Coburn House  
Continuation Sheet

Number 9 Page 1

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### CHAIN OF TITLE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY LAND RECORDS

Plat 15:63 May 15, 1948	William B. Rowe and Vivian I. Rowe plat Lots 48, 49, 50 and 51 of Forest BB Heights, Being a Re-Subdivision of Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Block 106, Section 7 and Lot 1 of Section 4, Block Y.
Deed 1086:486 November 1, 1948	William B. Rowe and Vivian I. Rowe to Will B. Williamson and Ann H. Williamson.
Deed 1203:277 February 13, 1950	Will B. Williamson and Ann H. Williamson to Ralph Stiles Smith and Caroline Elizabeth Smith. (Lot 49, Block 106, of Forest Heights)
Deed WWW 2398:170 November 16, 1959	Ralph Stiles Smith and Caroline Elizabeth Smith to John T. Coburn, Belle Berkley Coburn, and Nan C. Foster. (Lot 49, Block 106, of Forest Heights)
Deed 5250:3 April 11, 1980	Nan C. Foster, surviving Joint Tenant of John T. Coburn and Belle Berkley Coburn to Rene M. Foster, A. Scott Foster, and Jon B. Foster. (Lot 49, Block 106, of Forest Heights)
Deed NLP 5383:735 March 2, 1981	Rene M. Foster; A. Scott Foster, by power of attorney, said power of attorney vested in Nan C. Foster; Jon B. Foster, by power of attorney, said power of attorney vested in Nan C. Foster; and Nan C. Foster to James H. Sellers and Claude M. Bain. (Lot 49, Block 106, of Forest Heights)
Deed NLP 5507:749 March 1, 1982	Claude M. Bain, III, and Elizabeth F. Bain to James H. Sellers. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)
Deed NLP 5564:771 July 30, 1982	James H. Sellers to Mark E. Richardson and Michelle Y. Richardson. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)
Deed VJ 8505:741 October 22, 1992	Mark E. Richardson and Michelle Y. Richardson to Mark E. Richardson. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)

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Williamson-Coburn House  
**Continuation Sheet**

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Deed  
VJ 10566:606  
January 19, 1996

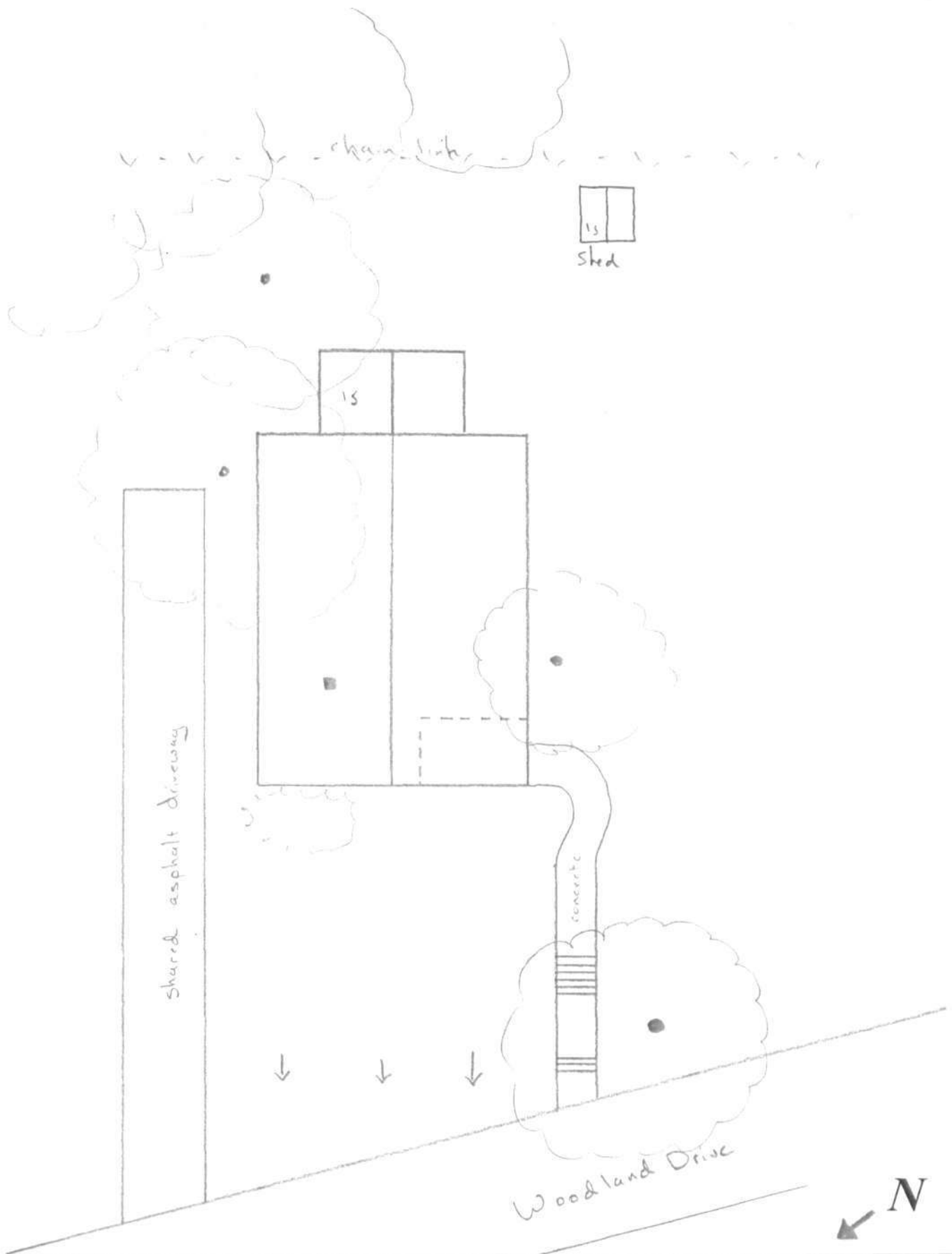
Mark E. Richardson to Carlos P. Trainor and Grossie Trainor. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)

Quit Claim Deed  
PM 30318:252  
January 28, 2009

Carlos P. Trainor and Grossie C. Trainor to Carlos P. Trainor. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)

Deed  
MMB 32430:493  
February 2, 2011

Jacob Geesing, substitute trustee, to Daniel Wilson. (Lot 49, Block 106, Section 7 of Forest Heights)



Date 4/21/2011

Not to Scale

I.D. # P6: 76A-54

Name/Address 5618 Woodland Drive, Forest Heights

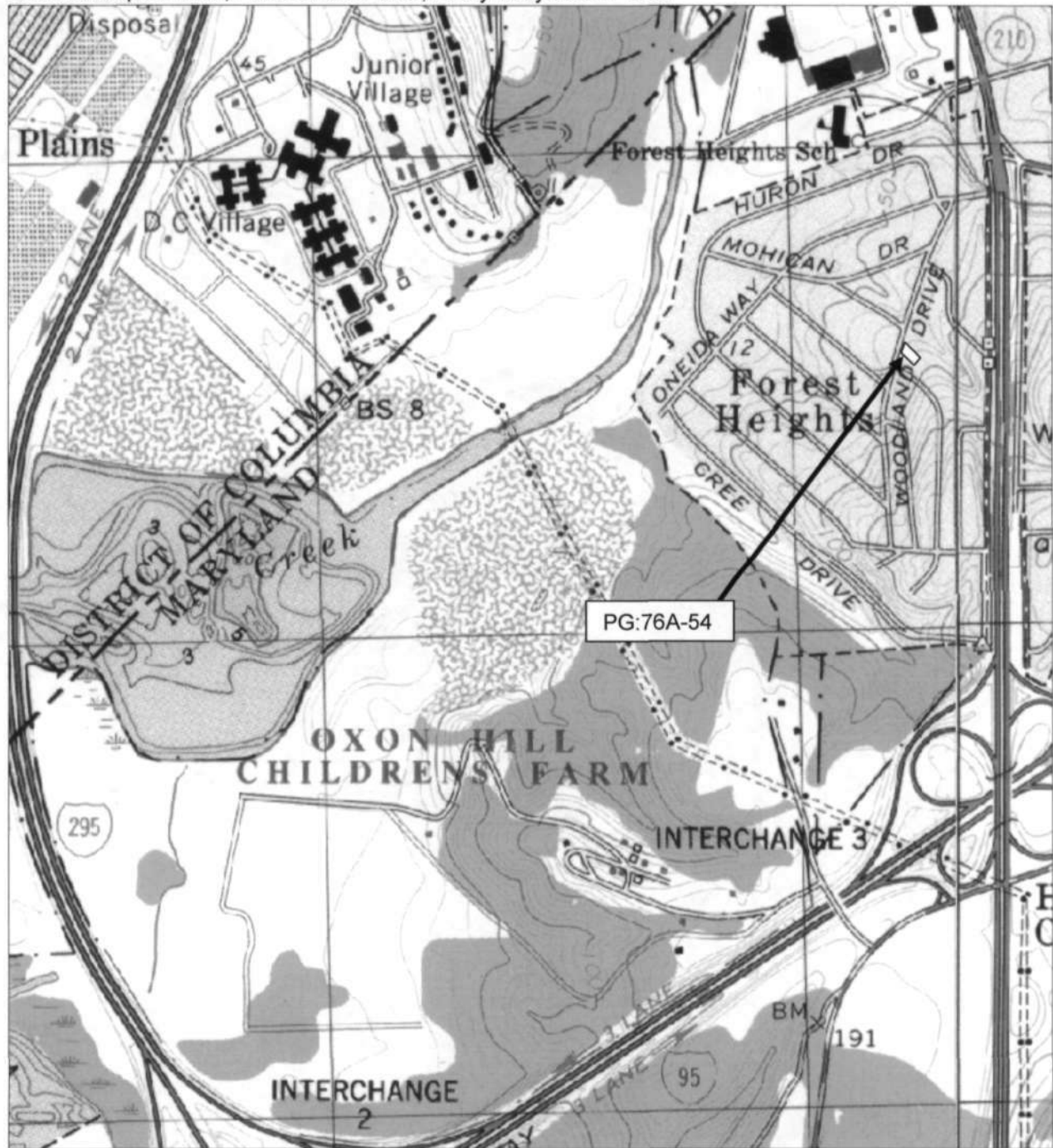


PG:76A-54

Williamson-Coburn House

5618 Woodland Drive, Oxon Hill

Alexandria quad 1965, Photorevised 1983, Bathymetry added 1982



Task Order 9/ RFP29-165  
Prince George's County, Maryland  
Digital Images Photo Log  
PG: 76A-54  
Williamson-Coburn House

Photographer: EHT Traceries

Date: August 2011

1.	PG;76A-54_2011-08-01_01.tif	Façade and Shed, looking E
2.	PG;76A-54_2011-08-01_02.tif	Façade, looking SE
3.	PG;76A-54_2011-08-01_03.tif	Rear, looking NW
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PG: 76A-54

Williamson-Coburn House

Prince George's County, Maryland

Traceries

August 2011

MD SHPO

Facade, Shed, View looking East

1/3



PG: 76A-54

Williamson-Coburn House

Prince George's County, Maryland

Traceries

August 2011

MD SHPO

Facade, View looking SE

2/3



PG:76A-54  
Williamson-Coburn House  
Prince George's County, Maryland  
Traceries  
August 2011  
MD SHPG  
Rear, View looking NW  
3/3